



CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



Portland Police Bureau

Tips and Techniques

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External Vest Equipment Requirements and Recommendations

The Training Division was recently asked to examine the attachment of various pouches and equipment to external vests. Lead instructors from Firearms, Patrol Procedures and Control Tactics met to discuss this issue at length. This examination has led to some new requirements and recommendations effective immediately.

Overall Utility of External Vests

The Training Division recognizes the benefits of the external vest and the ability for officers to choose between an external vest or an internal vest configuration. External vests allow officers to disperse their equipment over a larger area and give officers the ability to configure their vests to their individual needs. The ability to disperse equipment helps to alleviate issues of space on smaller officers, helps to provide options for various assignments and keeps equipment off the lower back, essentially promoting better posture and the ability to sit properly. Additionally, external vests allow more airflow and help keep officers cooler during hot weather. In this regard, the Training Division believes strongly in the continued ability for officers to use either an external vest or an internal vest if they so choose.

However, the Training Division has noticed several drawbacks to the external vests due to the abundant amount of molle PALS (pouch attachment ladder system) dispersed on the front, sides and rear of the vest. The first drawback is the ability for officers to place pouches and equipment in such a way that may interfere with their ability to effectively draw their duty weapons. During In-Service training, firearms instructors have recognized in certain instances officers had to modify their draw stroke to accommodate gear placed on the strong side of the external vest. Control Tactics instructors also noticed the placement of excessive or bulky gear on the strong side of the external vest in many situations inhibits an officer's ability to utilize the close quarters retention shooting position.

Control Tactics instructors have noticed that knives placed upon the external vest are generally exposed, visible, and provide poor retention. Through exhaustive live training and pressure testing,

defensive blades carried upon the external vest have shown to have poor accessibility and poor retention compared to other locations.

Prohibited Items

- **Knives:** Knives that are carried on the vest for defensive purposes, generally exposed, visible, and easily accessible by suspects are **prohibited** from being carried on the external vest. If officers desire to carry folding knives or multipurpose tools on the external vest, they must be carried concealed inside a pouch.
- **Scissors/Trauma Shears:** Scissors and Trauma Shears are **prohibited** from being carried exposed or visible on the external vest. If carried on the external vest, they must be carried concealed inside a pouch.
- **Seat belt cutters/Glass punches:** Seat belt cutters or glass punches are **prohibited** from being carried exposed or visible on the external vest. If carried on the external vest, they must be carried concealed inside a pouch.
- **Other potential blades or weapons:** Members are reminded that according to the Appearance Standard Directive 1110.00, clothing, uniforms and equipment will be selected and authorized taking into consideration safety, versatility, durability, compatibility, appearance, and tradition. Only authorized uniforms and equipment will be worn.

Handgun Magazines

Handgun magazines are currently **prohibited** from being carried on external vests, with the following exceptions:

1. SERT members are authorized to carry handgun magazines on their vest while performing their duties as a SERT member or any other assignment.
2. Members assigned to a plain-clothes assignment or an investigative unit where they are in plain clothes may carry handgun magazines on their vest.

AR15 Magazines

AR 15 magazines are **prohibited** from being carried on external vests, with the following exceptions:

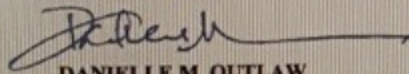
1. SERT members are authorized to carry AR 15 magazines on their vest while performing their duties as a SERT member or any other assignment.
2. Traffic members assigned to motorcycles are authorized to carry AR 15 magazines on their vest.

General Appearance and Utility Recommendation

- **Dominant Side Placement:** The Training Division strongly encourages members to minimize the attachment of pouches and equipment to the external vest on the dominant side of the body. Any pouches and equipment attached on the dominant side of the body should ideally be lower in profile and placed towards the midline of the body away from the officer's duty weapon. This allows for ease of access to the member's primary firearm and the ability to utilize a close quarters shooting position.
- **Overall Pouch / Equipment Placement:** The Training Division recommends members minimize the amount of gear on their external vest to allow for a full range of motion. The Training Division recommends that only one general-purpose utility pouch be worn on the external vest in addition to other equipment. Utility pouches are generally larger than other equipment pouches, and potentially inhibit the ability to utilize effective control tactics.
- **Approved Equipment and Pouches:** The Training Division recommends the following items be approved for potential external vest carry: Handcuffs, radios, IFAK's, phones, hobbles and tourniquets. The external vest should be used in conjunction with the duty belt to distribute equipment weight over the entire body, not as a replacement to the duty belt.

Weapons Systems (Lethal and Less Lethal)

- **Asp Batons, Pepper & Taser:** The Training Division does not have an issue with Asp batons and pepper spray on the vest. Placement of the taser on the vest was not seen problematic as long as the taser is placed in such a manner as to be accessed with the off-hand as per Directive 1020. As with the other weapon systems, training with the equipment on the vest is generally encouraged.
- **Knives:** With defensive knives being prohibited on external vests, the Training Division recommends knives be carried where they are accessible by the off-hand and where the body of the knife or sheath is not exposed or visible. Members are encouraged to contact the Training Division's lead Control Tactics instructors with any questions.
- **Secondary Firearms:** The Training Division recommends members follow current policy which states secondary firearms should be carried concealed and in holsters (Directive 1020).
- **Less Lethal Ammo:** Currently not allowed on the external vest and required to be worn in the training approved carrier per Directive 1020.



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